

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A bill to facilitate humanitarian relief for Cuba following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike has been introduced into the House of Representatives. The legislation (H.R.6962) would ease current restrictions on travel to and from Cuba by United States citizens for a period of 180 days. It would also ease restrictions on remittances and aid packages for the same period.

Rep. Sam Farr (D-Carmel), who is an original co-sponsor of the legislation, released the following statement:

"Temporarily lifting the family travel ban and allowing aid to be sent to family members for six months is an appropriate humanitarian response. It would be a sign of goodwill, a signal that the United States is ready to put politics aside and put the well-being of the Cuban people at the center of our effort.

"I will continue to support change in U.S.-Cuba policy, but this temporary delay of the embargo is purely humanitarian -- if it leads to better relations between our two countries that would be a welcome consequence.

"U.S. policy toward Cuba is a relic of the past, a personal vendetta against Fidel Castro, who no longer serves in a position of power. That we allow Cold War politics to influence how we distribute relief aid to Cuba is unconscionable.

"Cuba policy is all stick and no carrot, a policy that is intended to dole out punishment rather than promote change. The embargo against Cuba dates back to 1962 but has achieved nothing more than to enhance anti-U.S. emotions on the island."

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